

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

Replace the claims with the following rewritten listing:

1. (Original) An earplug comprising:
a foam; and
a component nestable with and bondable with said foam, wherein said component is disposed at least partially within a foam insertable portion and at least partially within a foam handle portion.
2. (Original) The earplug of Claim 1, wherein said foam is selected from the group comprising polyurethane, acrylic, acrylic blends, and mixtures and combinations including at least one of the foregoing materials.
3. (Original) The earplug of Claim 1, wherein said component is selected from the group comprising plastic, paper, dense paper, stiff foam, semi-stiff foam, foam, porous foam, cardboard, rubber, and combinations including at least one of the foregoing materials.
4. (Original) The earplug of Claim 1, further comprising at least one depression formed in said foam at least partially along said component and at least partially along said foam handle portion.
5. (Original) The earplug of Claim 1, wherein said at least one component has at least one passage disposed therein.
6. (Original) The earplug of Claim 1, wherein said component comprises a vent for venting a mold during a manufacturing of the earplug.

7. (Original) The earplug of claim 6, wherein said vent comprises a screw threaded portion.

8. (Original) The earplug of Claim 6, wherein said vent comprises a knurled portion.

9. (Original) The earplug of Claim 6, wherein said vent is disposed across the length of the component

10. (Original) The earplug of Claim 6 wherein said vent is disposed at a top of said component.

11. (Currently Amended) A set of a first earplug and a second earplug comprising:
a foam of said first earplug;
a foam of said second earplug;
a first component nestable with and bondable with said foam of said first earplug, wherein said first component is disposed at least partially within a first foam insertable portion and at least partially within a first foam handle portion;
a second component nestable with and bondable with said foam of said second earplug, wherein said second component is disposed at least partially within a ~~first~~ second foam insertable portion and at least partially within a ~~first~~ second foam handle portion; and
a connection device having a first end and a second end, the first end being attached to said first foam handle portion, and the second end being attached to said second foam handle portion.

12. (Original) The set of two earplugs of Claim 11, wherein said foam of said first earplug and said foam of said second earplug is selected from the group comprising polyurethane, acrylic, acrylic blends, and mixtures and combinations including at least one of the foregoing materials.

13. (Original) The set of two earplugs of Claim 11, wherein said first component and said second component is selected from the group comprising plastic, paper, dense paper, foam, porous foam, stiff foam, semi-stiff foam, cardboard, rubber, and combinations including at least one of the foregoing materials.

14. (Original) The set of two earplugs of Claim 11, further comprising a depression formed in said foam of said first earplug at least partially along said first component and at least partially along said foam handle portion of said first earplug and in said foam of said second earplug at least partially along said second component and at least partially along said foam handle portion of said second earplug.

15. (Original) The set of two earplugs of Claim 11, wherein said first component is nonporous and said second component is nonporous.

16. (Original) The set of two earplugs of Claim 11, wherein said connection device is a flexible cord.

17. (Original) The set of two earplugs of Claim 11, wherein said connection device is an under the chin device or a headband.

18. (Original) A method of making an earplug comprising:
disposing a component within a mold;
introducing a foam or foamable mixture into said mold; and
causing said foam or said foamable mixture to rise about said component
such that said component is nested within and bonded with said foam, such that said component is at least partially within a foam insertable portion and at least partially within a foam handle portion.

19. (Original) The method of Claim 18, wherein said foam or said foamable mixture is self-rising.

20. (Original) The method of Claim 18, wherein said foam is selected from the group comprising polyurethane, acrylic, acrylic blends, and mixtures and combinations including at least one of the foregoing materials, and wherein said component is selected from the group comprising plastic, paper, dense paper, foam, porous foam, stiff foam, semi-stiff foam, cardboard, rubber, and combinations including at least one of the foregoing materials.

21. (Original) The method of Claim 18, further comprising forming a depression in said foam along said component.

22. (Original) The method of Claim 18, further comprising forming a passage in said component.

23. (Original) The method of Claim 18, further comprising venting the mold during said causing said foam or foamable mixture to rise to allow a gas to move from an interior of the mold to an exterior of the mold.

24. (Original) The method of Claim 23 wherein said venting includes forming venting passageways between the component and the mold during said disposing of the component within the mold.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein said venting passageways extend from the interior to the exterior.

26. (Currently Amended) A method of making an earplug comprising:
disposing a component within a mold;
introducing a foam or foamable mixture into said mold;

causing said foam or said foamable mixture to rise about said component such that said component is nested within and bonded with said foam, such that said component is at least partially within a foam insertable portion and at least partially within a foam handle portion;

venting the mold during said rising of the foam or foamable mixture to allow a gas to move from an interior of the mold to an exterior of the mold; ~~The method of claim 23, further comprising and~~

sealing said interior of said mold from said exterior after said venting.

27. (Currently Amended) A method of making an earplug comprising:

disposing a component within a mold;

introducing a foam or foamable mixture into said mold;

causing said foam or said foamable mixture to rise about said component such that said component is nested within and bonded with said foam, such that said component is at least partially within a foam insertable portion and at least partially within a foam handle portion;

venting the mold during said rising of the foam or foamable mixture to allow a gas to move from an interior of the mold to an exterior of the mold; and sealing said interior of said mold from said exterior after said venting; ~~The method of claim 26;~~

wherein said sealing comprises allowing a volume of said rising foam or foamable mixture to enter a vent used in said venting and curing said volume therein.

28. (Original) A mold for forming a foam earplug comprising:

a lower mold portion including a lower cavity; and

an upper mold portion including an upper cavity and a means for venting a gas during a rising of the foam;

wherein the lower and upper mold portions are engageable so as to communicably engage the lower and upper cavities.

29. (Original) The mold of Claim 28 wherein said means for venting comprises a screw thread helically disposed on the upper mold portion in the upper cavity.

30. (Original) The mold of Claim 28 wherein said means for venting comprises a plurality of knurls disposed on the upper mold portion in the upper cavity.

31. (Currently Amended) The mold of Claim 28 wherein said means for venting comprises at least one annular flange disposed on the upper mold portion in the upper cavity, the flange including at least one space formed therein to allow said venting of said gas.

32. (Currently Amended) A mold for forming a foam earplug comprising:
a lower mold portion including a lower cavity;
an upper mold portion including an upper cavity and a means for venting a
gas during a rising of the foam; and
a plurality of ribs projecting from the upper mold portion radially into the upper cavity and traversing the upper cavity in a longitudinal direction;
wherein the lower and upper mold portions are engageable so as to
communicably engage the lower and upper cavities. The mold of claim 27 further
comprising.

33. (Newly Added) An earplug comprising:
a foam; and
a component nestable with and bondable with said foam;
wherein said component is disposed at least partially within a foam insertable portion and at least partially within a foam handle portion; and
wherein said component comprises a vent for venting a mold during a manufacturing of the earplug;
wherein said vent comprises a tortuous path.

34. (Newly Added) The earplug of claim 33, wherein said tortuous path comprises a screw threaded portion.

35. (Newly Added) The earplug of Claim 33, wherein said tortuous path comprises a knurled portion.

36. (Newly Added) The earplug of Claim 33, wherein said tortuous path extends across an entire length of the component.

37. (Newly Added) A mold for forming a foam earplug comprising:
a lower mold portion including a lower cavity; and
an upper mold portion including an upper cavity and a means for venting a gas during a rising of the foam;
wherein the lower and upper mold portions are engageable so as to communicably engage the lower and upper cavities; and
wherein said means for venting comprises a tortuous path extending from an interior of the mold to an exterior.

38. (Newly Added) The mold of Claim 37, wherein said tortuous path comprises a screw thread helically disposed on the upper mold portion in the upper cavity.

39. (Newly Added) The mold of Claim 37, wherein said tortuous path comprises a plurality of knurls disposed on the upper mold portion in the upper cavity.

40. (Newly Added) The earplug of Claim 37, wherein said tortuous path extends across an entire length of the component.

41. (Newly Added) The earplug of Claim 33, wherein the tortuous path causes at least one of collapse and densification of the foam during said manufacturing such that the foam cures in the tortuous path and seals the vent.

42. (Newly Added) The earplug of Claim 41, wherein the foam which is cured in the tortuous path includes at least one of a hardness and a density which is greater than that of the foam formed away from the tortuous path elsewhere in the insertable and handle portions.

43. (Newly Added) The mold of Claim 37, wherein the tortuous path causes at least one of collapse and densification of the foam during said rising of the foam such that the foam cures in the tortuous path and seals the means for venting.